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A  
SERMON

Preach'd at

*St. Mary-le-Bow,*

TO THE  
SOCIETIES  
FOR  
Reformation of Manners,  
April 5. 1697.

By *LILLT BUTLER* Minister  
of *St. Mary Aldermanbury.*

L O N D O N :

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TO THE  
**SOCIETIES**  
FOR  
*Reformation of MANNERS*  
In the Cities of  
*London & Westminster.*

**I** Have yielded to your Request for the Publishing of this Sermon, though I cannot but expect to undergo some unfavourable Censures for it. The Profane and Professed Enemies of that Cause it pleads, will undoubtedly, if it come in their way, be very liberal of their silly Scoffs, and foul Reproaches: But such Dirt is not worthy of any other regard, but to be despised and trampled on. I am only concerned for the Censures of some better Men,

## The Dedication.

who perhaps, through some false Representations of you and your Proceedings, may condemn that encouragement I have given to your Zeal and Undertakings. I shall therefore take this opportunity to acquaint them, that, after very curious inquiries into these matters, and a deliberate consulting with my own Conscience, I thought it highly became me to speak, what I have here Published. They that were Invested with the Legislative Power, did judg it very necessary to make divers Laws, for the exposing some Common and Scandalous Sinners, to shame and punishment. And our late Gracious Queen, of Blessed Memory, was pleased to give her particular Injunction, to those whose proper Business it was, to put these Laws in execution. Blessed be God, we have some Magistrates, who are very ready to discharge their Duty in this matter. But they cannot exercise that Power, is given them by God and the King, of making the Sword in their Hands an effectual Terror to evil doers, without evidence and conviction. And for the procuring of these, it lies upon Private Persons to assist them. If therefore any Good be to  
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## The Dedication.

be done, by the execution of Laws, they are in a great Measure answerable for it, if it be not effected.

There is need of a great deal of Zeal for God and Religion, to give Men the courage to ingage heartily in a work, which must Expose them to such great Expences, such severe Censures, such bitter Revilings, and such mighty Opposition, as they, who have been employed in prosecuting this affair, have had abundant Experience of. Wherefore, having undertaken to preach upon this Occasion, I endeavoured to speak something in Vindication, and for the further encouragement of your Zeal in so good a Thing. But knowing very well, that Zeal, in the best Matters, may easily transport men beyond what is fit, and really serviceable to the End it would promote, I thought it my Duty to give you some Cautions and Directions for the Management of it. And I hope this part of my discourse was not the least acceptable to you. Thus far also, I believe, I may promise for you, that, if any Good Men will be so kind, as to add their Advice for the due and effectual ordering of your endeavours, for the reforming or restrain-

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## The Dedication.

*ing the abominable Vices of the Age, you will thankfully accept and readily follow it. And, I conceive, it will not become any Men, rashly to condemn your Proceedings in so good a design, till they are well assured, that your Methods are faulty, and their better Counsels are rejected.*

*It is certainly a good thing you profess to be Zealously affected in, and therefore so far your Zeal must be good too. But your great care should be that it may be as good in all other Circumstances, as it is in respect of its End and Object: That it be not Biassed by any partial respects, or led out of its way by any rash or indiscreet Counsels; that it be always attended with a holy and irreproveable Conversation, and adorned with the greatest Modesty and Humility. This would be the most Effectual course, to put to Silence the Ignorance of Foolish, and the Malice of Wicked Men; and to ingage the Affection and Assistance of all Good Men. And I hope, these are not so Inconsiderable a party, as to be easily overcome in their united endeavours for God and Religion, whilst they have the Laws of the Land, both to de-*

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defend themselves, and to oppose their Enemies with. A Frown, or a hard Word, are generally the worst things we have to Fear. Where then is our love to God or our Country, if we have not Courage enough, in a Cause wherein they are so much concerned, to bear up against such weak, contemptible Assaults? Oh! that we might but see all sorts of good Men, Magistrates, Ministers and others, all conspiring together to make one Bold and vigorous Effort, for the suppressing those publick and scandalous Vices, which cry so loud to Heaven against us. We could have little cause to Despair of the Good Success of such a truly Religious Association. I am glad to understand there is such a hopeful prospect of it, from that great addition of new Bodies of Constables and Housekeepers and others, who, within a few Months past, have united together for the discharge of their Oaths and Consciences in this particular; and from the great Incouragement they have from the Government of this City. And I hope it will please God, to dispose the hearts of our Magistrates, in other parts of this Kingdom, so to consider the Oaths they have  
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*taken, and the account they must give to God, of the exercise of that Power and Authority they are invested with; that they may not dare to suffer any private Considerations, to hold their hands from that execution of Laws, wherein the glory of God and the publick Good are so much concerned. We know the Terroure of the Lord, and therefore cannot but speak, and with the greatest Zeal and Compassion, endeavour to persuade Men, to a faithful performance of those Duties, which are of such mighty Importance to us all, both with respect to our present and everlasting Happiness.*

*You have the Honour to lead in this Noble Design, and if you resolutely and wisely Proceed in your endeavours for the accomplishing of it, you may Reasonably hope to provoke others by your Zeal and Success, to joyn their Heads, and Hearts, and Hands with you. However you may be sure, that God will not forget your Works of Faith, and labours of Love, and patience of Hope; but render unto you according to the Zeal, and Integrity, and Constancy of your endeavours for him. Cast not away there-*

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so great a recompence of reward.  
Deal courageously, and the Lord will  
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Attempts successful, yet certainly to support  
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*Your affectionate Friend and Servant*

LILLY BUTLER.

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## The Dedication.

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Gal. iv. 18.

*It is good to be zealously affected  
always in a good thing.*

**T**HE design of our assembling together at this time, and in this manner, is to vindicate and encourage the most *zealous* endeavours to reform the Vices of the Age, and particularly, by helping forward the execution of our *good* Laws upon *evil* Men, upon notorious and scandalous Transgressors. I shall therefore consider, how much such Practices as these are Warranted and Recommended to us, by that general account *St. Paul* gives of the proper Objects of our Zeal, and the Excellency of it when it hath respect to such Objects, in the words of the *Text*, *It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing.*

That

That I may make this Discourse then as Serviceable as I can to the End for which it is intended, I shall do these following things.

*First.* I shall shew, That endeavouring, in our several places, to reform the corrupt Manners of the Age we live in, is a *good work*, and therefore proper matter to be *zealous in*.

*Secondly.* I shall shew, That to help forward the execution of Penal Laws, upon notorious and scandalous Sinners, is a *good work*, and therefore also proper matter to be *zealous in*.

*Thirdly.* I shall shew, What it is to be *zealously affected in* these or any *good things*.

*Fourthly.* I shall shew, What are to be the qualifications of our *Zeal* in these things, or what cautions are to be given to them that are thus *zealously affected*.

*Fifthly.* I shall answer some Objections against our being thus *zealously affected in* these matters. And

*Lastly.* I shall direct to some proper Considerations, for the *affecting* our hearts with *Zeal in these good things*.

*First.*

*First.* I am to shew, That endeavouring in our several places, to reform the corrupt Manners of the Age we live in, is a good work, and therefore proper matter to be *zealous in*. It is endeavouring to do those things, which best become, and most behove us to do; by which the most excellent purposes are served, and the highest obligations answered; and therefore it must be one of the best works we can be engaged in.

*First.* It is endeavouring to advance the honour of God, which indeed ought to be the end of all our endeavours. It is the end for which we have our being; for which all our Time, and all our Powers, and Faculties were given us. And what can be done more for the Honour of God, than reforming the lives of Men? When Men are reformed, then they proclaim, not only with their Lips but in their Lives, their acknowledgment of his Sovereign Majesty and Authority, of his most excellent Perfections, of the Goodness and Equity of his Laws, of the Wisdom and Justice of his Dispensations: Then they reverence his Name,  
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and fear his Power, and love his Goodness, and trust in his Promises, and give him that veneration and worship is due to him : Then they *shew forth his Virtues*, and manifest the *Power of his Grace* ; and, by the continual exercise of Love and Charity, do *cause abundant Thanksgivings unto God*. This is Honouring of God indeed, of God our Maker and Preserver, our greatest Friend and Benefactor, of our infinitely great and good God. What better imployment then can we have, more our Duty or more our Interest, than endeavouring to increase the Number of those by whom he is thus Glorified ? How can we *Love God*, in any sense, *with all our Heart, and with all our Mind, and with all our Strength*, if we do not prosecute such Designs, with the utmost warmth and vigour of all our Faculties ?

*Secondly*. This is endeavouring to advance the Honour and Interest of Christianity. And surely this is always good, but was never more necessary than Now. What can *adorn the Doctrine of our God and Saviour*, like the Holy Lives of its Professors ?

fessors? How would the Truth and Excellence, the Power and Efficacy of our Religion be Demonstrated, when it subdued the unruly Passions, mortified the strongest Lusts, conquered the most urgent Temptations, extirpated the most inveterate Habits of Sin, and adorned us with all the Beauties of a Christian conversation? Who could forbear to love, and admire, and acknowledge the Divinity of that Revelation, which brought forth such excellent Fruit; so worthy of God, so *good and Profitable unto Men*? Not all the Arguments of *Atheists* and *Infidels*, have done that Mischief to *Christianity*, as the lewd and dissolute Lives of its Professors. And we can never hope to see it recover the Reputation it hath lost, and overcome the powerful Opposition is now made against it, till we have better Lives to plead for it. What then can more deserve our *Zeal*, than the promoting that Reformation, which is so necessary and so prevailing a Means, to vindicate the Truth and Honour of that Religion, our *Blessed Lord and Saviour* came down from Heaven to Reveal, and  
 died



died upon the Cross to bear Witness to ?

*Thirdly.* This is endeavouring, in the best, and most effectual manner we can, to promote the Publick good of our Country. It is from our scandalous Vices, that most of our publick Calamities Spring, in a Natural way, and by these that the Wrath of God is provoked. And how can we do better Service to our Country, than by concurring to stop that raging Pestilence of Sin, which is ready to overspread the Land ; and to carry Infection, and Death, and Misery into every corner of it ; to set our selves *in the gap*, to keep out that inundation of Wrath which is breaking in upon us ; to help to restore that *Righteousness* which *Exalts a Nation*, which is the Honour and Safety of a People ; which endears them to God, unites them amongst themselves, banishes those Vices to which publick mischiefs and grievances are owing, and makes every Man a Hearty Friend to his Neighbour and the common good ? What imployment then can better deserve our *Zeal*, than endeavouring that Reformation of the lives of  
Men,



Men, which would more conduce to make us a flourishing and happy People, than all other our wisest Counsels, our strongest Armies, and our most liberal expence of Treasure and Blood?

*Fourthly.* It is endeavouring to promote the particular good of our Brethren, in every valuable respect. It is endeavouring to propagate that *Godliness*, which is profitable unto all things, *having the Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come.* It is endeavouring to reclaim Men from those sinful Lusts and practices, which impair their Health, and waſt their Eſtates, and blemish their Reputation, and wound their Conſciences, and *War againſt their Souls*, and ſink them down into everlaſting Perdition. It is endeavouring to reſtore Men to the favour and likeness of God; to bring them into the *Peaceable and Pleaſant Paths* of Righteouſneſs; to reſcue them from the *Bondage of Corruption into the glorious liberty of the Sons of God*; to ſecure to them a comfortable Life, a hopeful Death, and a bleſſed Immortality. Certainly ſuch Generous,

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such Charitable, such Beneficial endeavours, cannot but be exceeding *good* and worthy of our utmost *Zeal* and *Vigour*. Thus much may suffice to shew, the *Goodness* of our Endeavours in general, for reforming the evil Lives of Men. I proceed now,

*Secondly.* To shew, That to help forward the execution of Penal Laws, upon notorious and scandalous Sinners, is a *good* Work, and therefore also proper matter to be *zealous in*. This will be manifest if we consider,

*First.* How much the execution of Penal Laws, would conduce to that Reformation of Manners, which, I have already shewed, so eminently promotes the Honour of God, the Interest of Christianity, the Welfare of our Country, and the present and eternal Good and Happiness of Men. It must needs be a great Discouragement to Vice, to see it continually exposing Men to Shame and Punishment; to see Men of Honour and Authority imployed against it. Piety and Virtue must needs gather Strength and Boldness, when the Sword  
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of Justice defends them, and chastiseth the Enemies of them : When Wickedness is forced to hide its Head, and to creep into Corners, for Fear of it. The Habits of Sin will lose their strength, when they are restrained from exercise; and it cannot spread its Infection so wide, when the Examples of it are not suffered to be Common, Publick, or Secure ; when it is forced out of current use and Fashion : When Men cannot combine , in such Numbers, for the practice and Countenance of it, to aid and hearten one another in it. The sins of the Nation then would certainly be less in Number, less Scandalous, and less Provoking. If the execution of Laws could effect no more than this, yet God would be nothing so much dishonoured, nor our Religion disgraced, nor the Nation in Danger of publick Judgments, and therefore it cannot but be a *Good thing*, and great enough to deserve our most warm and vigorous Endeavours.

*Secondly.* Such an execution of Judgment and Justice, though it should avail but little towards the Reforming of

Men, yet it might, for its own sake, procure many Blessings from God to a People. The Actions of publick Persons, in their publick Stations, have the greatest Influence upon the publick good. These are the Actions of the Society, and therefore will the soonest procure common Judgments or Blessings. For Government, and Magistracy, and the execution of Justice, belong to a Society as such; and therefore, according as these are administred, it is reasonable to expect God should dispense his publick Favours. It was for want of *Eli's* executing Judgment upon his lewd *Sons*, that the *Israelites* were delivered into the Hands of the *Philistines*, and the *Ark of God* taken from them. 'Till Judgment was executed upon *Achan* for the *Accursed thing*, the *Israelites* still fled before their Enemies. It was by *executing Judgment* upon two scandalous Offenders, that *Phinehas* staved the fury of a devouring Plague, and *restored health to the Congregation of Israel*. Such another might afterwards have saved them from Captivity; if they could have found a Man in  
*Jerusalem*

*Jerusalem that executed Judgment, God would have Pardoned it, Jer. 5. 1. But Magistrates cannot ordinarily do this alone, if there be none to testify against the Transgressors. It is good therefore for us all, in our several places, to endeavour the promoting so good a Work. As Magistrates should be forward to execute Judgment, so should others be ready to discover and accuse notorious Offenders, without which there would be no opportunity for it. These are good things then, I have been hitherto pleading for, and therefore such as we ought to be zealously affected in. I proceed now,*

*Thirdly. To shew, What it is to be zealously affected in a good matter, and consequently what is our Duty, with respect to those exceeding good matters, which are under our present consideration. Zeal is the warmth and fervency of the Soul and Spirit, that which actuates all our Powers and Faculties, and inspires them with a new life and vigour, in the pursuit of that we are zealous for. More particularly.*

*First. He that is zealously affected in*  
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any matter, will be very earnest in his desires of succeeding in it. He will wish and long for more Power, and greater Opportunities, and stronger Aids, for the accomplishing of it. His Thoughts will be mighty intent upon it ; and continually busied, in seeking out proper and effectual ways of prospering in his Endeavours for it. He will follow it with as vehement Desires, as covetous and ambitious Men do Riches and Honour. Where then is our Zeal for Reformation, that most excellent good Thing, if we seldom think how we may be serviceable to the promoting of it ; If we are not grieved that we can do no more towards it ; If we carelessly neglect any proper means or opportunities of being aiding and assisting to it ; If we willingly shift it off to others, and are glad to be excused from having any hand in it our selves ? It is very sad to think of it, but this, I fear, is almost the common Case of *Christians*, of those I mean that call themselves so: For what can they have of *Christianity*, besides the Profession of it, who are thus coldly affected

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to that, wherein the Honour of *Christ* and his Gospel, and the Happiness of those, for whom he was born and died, are so very much concerned ?

*Secondly.* He that is *zealously affected* to any good End, will be exceeding active and industrious in the prosecution of it. His Endeavours will be proportionable to his Desires, great and strong as they. Such was the Zeal of our *Blessed Saviour*, who *went about doing good* ; and that of *St. Paul*, which engaged him in *Watchings often, and in Labours more abundant*. And if we are *zealously affected* towards the reforming the lives of Men, we shall not be *slothful in this Business*, but *fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord* with all our Might in it. We shall never think we can take too much pains, or grudge any toil or labour for the accomplishing of it. When an Opportunity appears to us, we shall greedily embrace it, and improve it with our utmost Vigour. Where then is our *Zeal in this matter* ? What little Difficulties discourage us ? How little Time or Pains do we imploy in it ? How much short do the most in-



dustrious of us come, of the restless travail, and unwearied diligence, with which we see Men every day labouring, for the uncertain Riches, the fading Honour, and the vain and forbidden Pleasures of this world?

*Thirdly.* He that is *zealously affected* in any *good thing*, will be very courageous in the pursuit of it. If we were indeed *zealously affected* to this good work of reforming the Lives of Men, we should not easily be frightened from doing our part in it, by the Enemies and Opposition we are like to encounter with. We should not care, what a foolish World may call us, or how a malicious World may use us. We should *not be afraid of their Terrors*, or discouraged by their Censures, or put out of countenance by their Reproaches, but boldly and resolutely proceed in that *Good Cause* we are engaged in. These would be but as dry *Hay and Stubble*, unable to stop the progress of a flaming *Zeal* for God and Religion; we should scorn to desert so pious, and noble, and profitable a Work, for fear of those filthy, and lewd, and ungodly Wretches

Wretches that oppose it. We should go out in the name of the Lord against them, and in that have strong confidence. Though we knew that we must wrestle, both with *Flesh and Blood*, and with *spiritual wickednesses in high Places*, yet for all this we should not decline the Combate, but be strong in the Lord and in the power of his Might. We should be ready to answer with St. Paul, if we were told as he was, that *bonds and afflictions did abide us*, that *none of these things move us*, neither count we our lives dear unto us, so that Christ may be magnified in our Bodies, *Acts 20. 23, 24. Phil. 1. 20.* The opposition we meet with would rather heighten our Courage, and strengthen our Resolutions, and animate our Endeavours, and increase our Labours, in so pious and charitable a Work.

*Fourthly.* He that is zealously affected in a good thing, will be liberal in his Expenses for the promoting of it. Thus we find the Zeal of the Primitive Christians prevailed with them, even to sell their possessions, and to lay the price at the Apostles feet, when the great Necessities of the Church

Church required it of them, *Acts* 4. 34, 35. Thus also the Zeal of the Churches of Macedonia, made the riches of their liberality to abound, in their deep poverty; They were ready, as St. Paul tells us, to their power, yea and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves, praying us with much intreaty, that we would receive the Gift, *2 Cor.* 8. 3, 4. They offered more unasked, than they could well spare, and earnestly besought them to accept their Contributions. Thus liberal should we be in advancing those good works we are pleading for, if we were as zealously affected as they were. We should be glad to distribute, and willing to communicate of our earthly Goods, in so heavenly a Cause, so acceptable to God, so serviceable to his Honour and to the Interest of his Church and Kingdom. But because as the *Apostle* intimates, in the Verse before the Text, we may be zealously affected, but not well. I proceed,

*Fourthly.* To shew, what are to be the Qualifications of our Zeal in these things; or what Cautions are to be given to them, who are thus zealously affected.

*First.*

*First.* Our Zeal must be impartial with respect to Persons and Parties. It is a general *Reformation* of all sorts of Men we pretend to be *zealous* for; and therefore it must not have only a particular Regard to some particular Men. The Laws are made for the restraint, and correction of all Mens enormous Vices, and therefore our Endeavours, in promoting the execution of them, should also have equal Respect to all. God and Religion are dishonoured, and the Publick good is prejudiced and indangered, by all sorts of wicked Men, and all Mens Souls are equally hazarded by their scandalous Offences. And therefore it cannot be a truly religious Zeal, which is guided by any private or partial Respects. It may be a *Zeal* of Spight and Malice, of some carnal or worldly Affection; but it cannot be a *Zeal* of Love to God and our Neighbour. If it were a *Zeal* of Love to God, it would use the same Endeavours, where the Honour of God is equally concerned; if it were a *Zeal* of Love to our Neighbour, it would not be least active, where we love most. If  
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we use those we call the Means of Reformation, and promote the execution of Laws, chiefly upon those, to whose Persons, or Interests, or religious Communion we are disaffected; our pretended *Zeal*, for a general Reformation of Mens Lives, is certainly counterfeit and hypocritical. It cannot be thought, we should be most concerned for their good, for whom we have the least Affection. And therefore the *Zeal* of such Endeavours, will shew a great concern to see Men punished rather than reformed. It will not be punishing Mens Persons, that we may reform their Vices; but punishing their Vices, that we may hurt their Persons.

*Secondly.* Our *Zeal* must be wise and prudent, and all its Endeavours guided with Deliberation and Discretion. *Zeal* is a sharp Instrument, and therefore not to be managed with a careless or unskillful Hand. If we use it rashly, and without good Advice, we may stab our own Designs, and ruin that Cause we would defend by it. We should *not* therefore *lean too much to our own Understandings,*  
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in the methods of prosecuting those *good* Designs we are *zealous in* : but be continually *asking Counsel of God*, and of grave, and wise, and experienced Men. We should consider Seasons and Circumstances, and, with great Deliberation and Judgment, make choice of those that are most proper, to set forward the good Work we have in hand. In prosecuting the noble design of *Reformation*, wherein you are like to meet with so many Difficulties, and such mighty Opposition, it will behove you, as wise Men are wont to do in like cases, to strengthen your Hands all you can, to unite your Forces, and to combine together into *Societies* ; that you may mutually advise, and countenance, and support, and encourage, and vindicate, and defend one another, in your Attempts for the Accomplishing of it.

*Thirdly.* Your *Zeal* must be orderly. It must not transport you beyond the Bounds of your Places and Callings. Private persons must not usurp the Office of the Priest or Magistrate; but move exactly in their own Sphere, towards that  
good

good End they have before them. *God hath set us in the Church as Members in the Body, and all Members have not the same Office; If the Feet will invade the Office of the Head, what can follow but overturning and confusion? The Law is good if we use it lawfully : But if we desert our Station, or take any illegal courses to procure the execution of it, we make our selves Transgressors, whilst we pretend to be Reformers. We cannot expect the Countenance of sober Men, or the Protection and Blessing of God. You know how severely God dealt with Uzah, for his irregular Zeal, in attempting to preserve the Ark of God from falling.*

*Fourthly.* Your Zeal in these good matters, must be, attended with a proportionable regard to all other parts of your Duty, and of the same Piece with the rest of your Lives; otherwise it will very ill become you, and serve the End it is in pursuit of. You must be *holy, and harmless, and without rebuke* your selves, whilst you are zealously endeavouring to reform the Vices of *a crooked and perverse Nation.*



*Nation.* You may reasonably expect that reply, *Physician heal thy self*, when you are applying Remedies to other Mens Diseases, and are infected with those that are as mortal your selves. You must carefully avoid giving any just occasion to any man to speak evil of you, for many will seek Occasions, and improve them all they can, to disgrace both you and the good Design you are zealously affected in. But if whilst you make Men feel the Warmth of your Zeal, they also see the Light of it shine before them, in all the exercises of a sober, righteous, and godly life; this will be such a manifest Proof of the Sincerity of its intentions, to serve God and to do good, as none of its adversaries will be able to gainsay or resist. Then Men will be ashamed to reproach it, or to impute the Endeavours of it, to any corrupt Affections, or to any worldly sinister Ends. Then no good man will be ashamed to appear for you, to plead your Cause, or to encourage your Endeavours. Then you may reasonably hope, that God will not throw you aside, as unworthy Instruments for  
such

such noble Purposes; but be ready to assist, and bless, and prosper your Undertakings for him.

*Fifthly.* Your Zeal should be attended with great Humility, with low thoughts of your selves and your best performances, and a modest and humble Behaviour towards all Men; for Pride and Selfe-conceit will stain the Beauty, and hinder the Efficacy, of the most zealous Endeavours for God and Religion. These are Vices, that are *abominable* both *in the sight of God* and Man, and corrupt every thing that hath relation to them. And these are the Sins you will be most in danger of. For this is the common Stragem, whereby the *Devil* overcomes such, as have held out against all his other Temptations. He endeavours to flatter them into a great Opinion of their own Virtue, and to make them proud of their Conquests over him; and so secures them to himself, by magnifying the Service they have done against him. Let this then be your particular care, to arm your selves against this Temptation, and to keep your Zeal always *cloathed with Humility,*

*Humility*, which will be the greatest Ornament you can give it. Be as thankful as you can for it, but never make it your Boast, that you *are not as other Men are*. Consider then, who it is that *makes you to differ*, and of *whose only gift it comes* that you are able to do unto God any good and laudable Service; that every good Work you do, increaseth your obligation to do more for him, but can be no just reason for your *thinking more highly of your selves*; that when you have done the most and best you can for him, you are far from *rendering unto him according to all he hath done for you*; and have still reason to hold down your Heads, and to smite upon your Breasts and say, every one of you, *God be Merciful unto me a Sinner*. You have an excellent Example of this Zeal and Humility together in *St. Paul*, who *laboured more abundantly than they all*, yet he calls himself *the least of the Apostles*, and gives all the Glory to God, *It was not I, saith he, but the Grace of God that was with me*. I come now

*Fifthly.* To answer some Objections, against our *zealous* Endeavours to reform the Vices of the Age.

*First.* Some are ready to object, that this is not a proper Season for such Attempts. Wickedness is so impudent and daring, and so much countenanced by those, who are most able and obliged to suppress it, that now to contest zealously against it, is but *labouring in vain, and spending our Strength for nought*, and likely to make it insult and triumph the more, upon baffling our Endeavours against it. There is indeed but too much Truth in this Character of the Age we live in; but however, it ought not to quench our *Zeal* in labouring to make it better. For.

*First.* We find the holy Servants of God were not discouraged, in former times, by the same Difficulties. When *all flesh had corrupted themselves* Noah continued a *zealous Preacher of Righteousness*. When the Cry of Sodom's sins was gone up to Heaven, and they were most impudently bold in their commission of them, *righteous Lot* did not cease to rebuke and op-

oppose their Wickedness. When the *Altars of God were throwing down*, and the People were slaying his *Prophets*, even then was *Elijah exceeding Jealous for the Lord God of Hosts*. The Holy Prophets did zealously set themselves to reform the Manners, of a *sinful Nation, a People laden with iniquity*, and enraged against all that opposed their growing Wickedness. *John the Baptist* did not forbear his warnings and reproofs, when he was beset with a *Generation of Vipers*. And the Blessed *Apostles*, with undaunted Courage, persisted to defend the Cause of *Christianity*, when it was every where *spoken against*. Were not these Men of like *Passions with our selves*? Is not reforming the Lives of Men as good a Work as ever? Have we not the same God to assist us, the same Laws to oblige us, and the same Reward to encourage us, that they had? What Excuse can we find in the difficulty of this Work now, which they might not have pleaded for laying aside that Zeal, with which they endeavoured the accomplishing of it? But

*Secondly.* The worse the Age is, the more *zealous* should the Friends of Pietie and Virtue be to make it better. When we see Religion almost ready to expire, where is our Love to God or that, if we do not hasten to its relief, and apply our most earnest Endeavours for the support and recovery of it? When that is lost, then all our Hopes are lost; then there will *nothing remain for us, but a fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation to devour us.* And can any Difficulties excuse our Sloth, when the Danger is so great and so apparent? When Virtue is almost irrecoverably oppressed, and cries with dying Groans for succour, shall we refuse to fly to its Defence, for fear we should indanger it by our Assistance? What a brave and noble thing rather would it be, to encounter Wickedness in the height of all its Triumphs, to *go out in the Name of the Lord* against it, when it prides its self in its Gyant-like stature, and hath all its Weapons of War about it, and most insolently *desies the Armies of the living God?* How would such Zeal and Courage become the Children



Chidren of the *Lord of Hosts*, their noble birth, and *high calling*, and glorious hopes and expectations?

*Thirdly.* As bad as the Age is, we have no reason utterly to despair of all Success, in these our *zealous* Attempts to amend it. It is the Cause of God, a Cause wherein his Honour is mightily concerned, a Cause he loves to see us ingaged in, a Cause in which he hath oftentimes wonderfully assisted, a Cause he seems not to have cast off all regard to at this time amongst us. We have great reason to think *it is of God*, that, amidst so many Discouragements, it hath come into the Hearts of some to unite their *zealous* Endeavours, to repress the Insolence of insulting Wickedness, and to rescue Pietie and Religion from that Contempt and Oppression it labours under. Who knows, but that *little Cloud*, which appears but *as a Mans Hand*, may, by the Blessing of God, so improve and spread its self, as to be able at length by its refreshing Showers, to renew the life, and strength, and beauty, of withering Virtue. The *Powers of Darkeness*, and



the corrupt Nature of Man are against us; but, if God be for us, we are certainly the stronger side. And why should we not hope, that God will at length arise and plead his own Cause, and make his Work prosper in the Hands of those, that faithfully and zealously apply themselves to the help of the Lord against the mighty? For the Eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole Earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them, whose Heart is perfect towards Him, 2. Chron. 16. 9.

*Fourthly.* How unsuccessful soever our zealous Endeavours may be for the reforming the Nation, yet they may be succesful for the Preservation and Benefit of it. God may shew Favour to the whole Body, for the sake of those few Members of it, that are ingaged so heartily in promoting his Honour and Interest. He may do that for us for their sakes, which he did for Zoar for Lot's sake, and would have done for Sodom its self, had there been but Nine more such as he was, to be found in it.

*Fifthly.* Our zealous Endeavours for reforming others, though they may not be

be effectual for the Preventing publick Calamities, yet they may be a means to preserve us from them, or to procure for us great advantages under them. Thus were *Noah*, and *Lot*; and *Jeremiah* preserved, at least from the extremity of those publick Judgments, which by their *zealous* Attempts to reform the Lives of Men, they endeavoured, though unsuccessfully, to divert. But what share soever God may think fit to give us in outward Calamities, we may be sure of the support and comfort of a good Conscience under them; a Conscience testifying to us, that they are not the effect of any Sloth or Neglect of ours; that we did our best to prevent them; and that tho' we fall under them, yet we do not fall under that Wrath of God which accompanies them; that all these things will work together for our good, who have loved and served God with so much Zeal.

*Secondly.* Some perhaps may object against these *zealous* Attempts to reform the Wickedness of the Age, that they will expose them to Scorn and Derision,

to harsh Censures, and foul Reproaches. But had ever any great and *good thing* been done, if Men had always thought this, a sufficient Excuse for declining the attempting of it? Have not the best Men, and the best things, been always subject to the Scoffs and Revilings of prophane and dissolute Men? Was there ever any brave, heroical Attempt made, on the behalf of Religion, that could escape the spiteful Censures of a naughty World? But can any unjust Reproaches alter the nature of a good action; or make it less our Duty, or less becoming of us? Is not the approbation of our own minds, and the esteem and love of all wise and good Men, and of the infinitely wise and good God, a sufficient Encouragement against all the scurrilous Language of unreasonable and wicked Men? Will not a strong and mighty love to God make us to *glory in the Cross of Christ*, and to *rejoyce that we are counted worthy to suffer shame for his Name*? A malicious Informer is indeed a Character to be abhorred; but when Informing signifies nothing, but Witnessing against the

the great and scandalous Sinners of the Age we live in, for their and the publick good, and the Glory of God, then it is a generous and honourable thing, then it is doing what all the *Prophets*, and all the *Apostles*, and our *Blessed Lord* himself, did before us. And if ye are reproached for so doing, happy are ye, for the Spirit of Glory and of God resteth on you; and these light Afflictions, which are but for a moment, will work for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory. Why then should we not seek, with all our Might, to affect our Hearts with Zeal in these matters, that with vehement Desires, unwearied Industry, and Invincible Courage, we may persue the great and good design, of restraining and reclaiming Sinners? I proceed therefore,

*Fifthly.* To direct to some proper Considerations, for the inflaming our Souls with Zeal in these good things.

*First.* Consider, What mighty Obligations God hath laid upon you to do the utmost you can for him. It is in him you live, and move, and have your being. It is by his Providence that you are preserved

served; and by his Bounty that you are supplied, with all the good things you enjoy; and by the Blood of his only begotten Son, whom he freely gave for such weak, and foolish, and provoking Sinners, that you are redeemed from Death and Hell. And can you be cold and negligent, in seeking to advance the Kingdom, and Honour, and Interest, of so hearty a Friend, so liberal a Benefactor, so tender a Father, so good and gracious a God? Can you think of all the Wonders of the Divine Love, with cold and unaffected Hearts? Do you not blush to think, how little you have done for him, who hath done so much for you?

*Secondly.* You should often set before you the Zeal of our Blessed Saviour in this matter. For this purpose he came down from Heaven, *to seek and to save that which was lost.* He took upon him the form of a Servant, and being found in fashion as a Man, he humbled himself unto death, even the death of the Cross, that he might redeem us from iniquity, and purify to himself a people, zealous of good works, that he might

might *destroy the works of the Devil*, and rescue the souls of Men out of his hands. This was the business of his Life, and the design of his Death. And can any thing better deserve our *Zeal*, than that which he thought not unworthy of his Blood? Can we be indifferently affected to that, which our dear Redeemer valued at so dear a rate? Can we be better, or more honourably imployed, than in uniting our Endeavours with the Son of God, and *working together with him* for the recovery of a perishing World? Are we not concerned, that in any respect he should live and *die in vain*, who lived and died for our Salvation? Can we stand still, and make no Attempts to stop the growth of that, which renders his *Passion of none effect* to Men, and *destroys the Souls for whom he sweated, and bled, and died*?

*Thirdly.* Consider the *Zeal* and Diligence of the Enemies of this good work of reclaiming sinful Men. How zealous and industrious is the *Prince of Darkness*, in corrupting the Lives and destroying the Souls of Men? All his *Cunning*,  
and

and Strength, and Activity is imployed in this work. He is always laying his *Snares*, and persuing his malicious *Devi-ces*, *running to and fro, and walking about, seeking whom he may devour.* How *zealous* are his Agents and Ministers, in carrying on the pernicious design of their Master, to advance his Kingdom, to increase the number of his Captives, to entice Men to *run with them into the same excess of Riot*, and to carry them down to Hell with them? And shall we lie down and sleep, and tamely suffer them to carry all before them? Are we not confounded with Shame to think, that they should be more bold and industrious, in dishonouring God, and propagating Sin, and Death, and Misery, than we can find in our hearts to be, in promoting the Glory of God, the interest of Piety, and the everlasting Happiness of Men? Is the *Devil* a better Master than God, or corrupting with sin a better Cause than restraining Men from it? Do we see Men resolutely defying the Power and Wrath of God, and boldly proceeding in their ungodly Attempts  
 against



against the amazing Terrors of Death and Hell ? And are we discouraged from the most necessary, and honourable, and beneficial undertakings, for *fear of men that shall die, or any light afflictions for a moment* ? Is it thus we love God and Goodness ? Is it thus we answer the engagements of our Profession, and the Vows we have made to our Lord and Redeemer ? Is this our *fighting manfully against Sin, the World and the Devil* ? Blessed be God that there are any sparks of this Zeal, I have been recommending to you, reviving amongst us. Who can tell *how great a matter this little Fire may kindle* ? May the Blessed Spirit of God, who appeared *as Fire* upon the Apostles, kindle it more and more in all our Hearts ; that it may at length consume all those *Tares the Enemy hath sown amongst us*, and we may henceforward bring forth such Fruits unto perfection, which are worthy of all the care and husbandry God hath bestowed upon us. Then we might comfortably hope, that God would be merciful unto us and bless us, and lift up the light of his Countenance upon us,  
and

and *make us a praise in the earth*, that he would be a *Wall of Fire*, round about us, an invincible Defence against all our Enemies, and *the Glory in the midst of us*, and that we should once more see *Jerusalem in prosperity*, and *Peace upon Israel*. Amen.

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